

one reason: The Republican leader has refused to compromise. Again, today we heard the same old song from the Republican leader. His position has not budged since March. First, he put the Senate on pause while the spread of the virus got worse and worse. Then, after pressure mounted, the Republican leader finally decided to put forward a series of bills that comprised only the things the Republicans want.

While the Nation has been clamoring for a bipartisan solution, the Senate, under the leadership of the Republican leader, has only been allowed to vote on partisan Republican proposals, each of which has been sorely inadequate and each of which has contained poison pills designed to ensure the bill's failure.

The Republican leader never mentions those poison pills in his speeches to this Chamber where he excoriates Democrats for refusing to pass "bipartisan legislation" that everyone agrees on. But "bipartisan" does not mean Democrats must agree to whatever the Republican leader wants or whatever issues he picks. "Bipartisan" means both sides sitting down and finding an agreement. We all know that is the case.

We have a Democratic House. They are going to need Democratic votes in the Senate. So Senate Democrats are simply asking the Republican leader to do one thing: Sit down and negotiate.

Now, since March, since Secretary Mnuchin and I negotiated the CARES bill, the Republican leader has constantly refused to sit down with Republicans and negotiate a bipartisan solution. He puts his bill—with no Democratic input—on the floor and says, "Take it or leave it." That is no way—no way—to get things done. It wasn't in April or May or June or July or August or September or November, and it isn't now.

We want the leader to sit down and negotiate so we can come up with a bipartisan proposal that can pass both the House and the Senate. And Speaker PELOSI and I have modified our proposal several times in an effort to meet our Republican counterparts in the middle. Last week, Speaker PELOSI and I went even further and agreed to use a bipartisan bill, crafted by moderate Senators from both sides of the aisle, as a framework for the negotiations. We have not heard the same willingness from the Republican leader.

However, there are some encouraging signs. The bipartisan group of Senators and House Members working on this latest proposal continues to make progress. I was encouraged to see the Senator from Louisiana this weekend say he was hopeful the President would sign such an agreement. Let's use the work of the Gang of 8 as the basis for bipartisan negotiations and compromise.

The bottom line: We have to get something done for the American people before the end of the year. We Democrats have been trying since the

spring, back when Republicans were saying they did "not feel the urgency of acting." I believe those were the leader's words.

Well, it is going to take a sense of urgency now, Mr. Leader, and it is going to take a willingness to give a little, not just to put your bill on the floor and say: Take it or leave it.

As I said, it is encouraging that some Republicans are already on that path. Hopefully, the Republican leader can catch up with the more fairminded Members of his caucus.

NOMINATIONS

Madam President, now, on nominations—another matter. The incoming Biden administration continues to name candidates it will tap to lead Cabinet agencies and other key positions in the Federal Government.

Today, President-Elect Biden introduced his healthcare team, including Dr. Fauci, who will stay on—thank God—as Chief Medical Adviser; Dr. Vivek Murthy to serve as Surgeon General; Dr. Rochelle Walensky to head the CDC; and Xavier Becerra, the attorney general of California, to be the next Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Like most of President-Elect Biden's selections so far, Mr. Becerra's nomination is groundbreaking. He will be the first Latino to ever run the Department of Health and Human Services.

Now, these nominees, once confirmed, will face a monumental task. President-Elect Biden will inherit a once-in-a-generation healthcare crisis—a crisis made worse by the Trump administration's lack of focus, competency, and consistency over the past year.

By naming a deeply experienced and tested team of senior healthcare advisers, President-Elect Biden is getting ready to right the ship and execute a whole-of-government approach to crushing the virus and providing affordable healthcare to all Americans.

As safe and effective vaccines become available over the next year, President-Elect Biden's team will also have to work with States and healthcare providers to get Americans vaccinated.

To state the obvious, healthcare is going to be the No. 1 challenge when the new administration takes office. We are in the middle of a once-in-a-century public health crisis. Accordingly, President-Elect Biden's team should be confirmed swiftly to ensure that no time is lost in the fight against the pandemic.

Regrettably, there is a split screen this week between the seriousness of the incoming Biden administration and the activities of the Republican majority here in the Senate.

On Tuesday, the Republican chairman of the Homeland Security Committee has invited Dr. Jane Orient to give testimony at a hearing in his committee. Dr. Orient is a member of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons—a benign-sounding name that obscures some dangerous policies.

According to the New York Times, Dr. Orient's association "opposes government involvement in medicine and views Federal vaccine mandates as a violation of human rights."

Dr. Orient herself has expressed skepticism about coronavirus vaccines and continues to hawk hydroxychloroquine as a COVID-19 treatment, following the lead of President Trump, who boosted the drug despite scientific evidence that it is ineffective.

So while President-Elect Biden is nominating experienced, committed public servants to lead the next administration's healthcare policy, the Republican majority is inviting prominent anti-vaxxers to Senate committee hearings—a study in contrasts, to say the least.

After one of the most difficult years in recent memory, we finally have a light at the end of the tunnel in the discovery of several effective and safe vaccines. They are the best chance we have of ending the terrible scourge of this disease and getting our lives back to normal.

And yet, the effectiveness of the vaccine only matters insofar as the number of Americans who are willing to take it. The more Senate Republicans dip their toes into the water of these anti-science, anti-vax conspiracy theories, the more damage it does to our country. Public figures at all levels should be building up confidence in a vaccine, not giving a platform to those who would undermine it.

The Senator from Wisconsin, the chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, should revoke his invitation to Dr. Orient.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I came to the floor to talk about some other things, but I just want to say in response to our friend, the Democratic leader, it sounds to me that he has got a case of "do as I say, not as I do" when it comes to COVID-19 relief bills.

If my memory serves me correctly, he has led the effort to block the Senate's consideration of five different COVID-19 relief bills.

Speaker PELOSI has made the incredible statement that "nothing is better than something" when it comes to COVID-19 relief. That is easy to say when you are still getting a paycheck, when you have a job you can go do, and you can provide for your family, and you have access to healthcare.

But for the millions of Americans who have suffered through this pandemic, those are words that sound a lot like Marie Antoinette: "Let them eat cake."

I mention this because I have been around this place long enough to know that, unless you tell people the whole story, too often they believe the talking points and the half story or the incomplete story, like we heard from the Democratic leader.